

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2864
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION NATO
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 3506

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS IR NL
SUBJECT: DUTCH FRIGATES FOR IRAN

REF: THE HAGUE 3471

1. SUMMARY: DEFENSE STATE SECRETARY VAN EEKELEN HAS RAISED WITH US SOME REPORTED CONVERSATIONS IN TEHRAN BETWEEN U.S. AND IRANIAN OFFICIALS REGARDING THE DUTCH FRIGATES AND HARPOON. THE DUTCH SEE THESE CONVERSATIONS AS AN ATTEMPT BY THE UNITED STATES TO UNDERCUT WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE PRACTICALLY FIRM ORDERS FOR THE FRIGATES. WE NEED GUIDANCE ABOUT WHAT WE CAN SAY TO THE DUTCH REGARDING THIS DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARGE WAS CALLED TO MOD LATE JUNE 26 BY STATE SECRETARY VAN EEKELEN, WHO SAID HE WISHED TO EXPRESS THE GOVERNMENT'S GREAT CONCERN ABOUT A RECENT DEVELOPMENT REGARDING THE DELIVERY OF FRIGATES TO IRAN AND THE DUTCH REQUEST FOR
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PERMISSION TO EQUIP THOSE FRIGATES WITH HARPOON MISSILES. HE SAID THIS IS AN IMPORTANT CONTRACT FOR THE NETHERLANDS AND HE NOTED THAT THE GON HAS GIVEN A GREAT DEAL OF ASSISTANCE TO DUTCH CONTRACTORS IN THIS REGARD. HE SAID THIS IS ONE OF THE SENSITIVE ITEMS IN U.S.-NETHERLANDS RELATIONS AND THAT IT WOULD BE A VERY SERIOUS MATTER IF THE MEDIA HAD ANY INKLING OF THE DELAY CAUSED BY U.S.

CONSIDERATION OF THE HARPOON REQUEST.

3. VAN EEKELEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT A RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN TEHRAN HAS INCREASED DUTCH CONCERN. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT AN OFFICIAL U.S. DELEGATION THERE HAS CAST DOUBT ON DUTCH FIRE CONTROL SYSTEMS AND RAISED A QUESTION OF COMPATIBILITY OF THOSE SYSTEMS WITH U.S. ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT. ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT, ADMIRAL COLLINS OF THE U.S. MAAG IN TEHRAN HAS PRESSED THIS QUESTION OF INCOMPATIBILITY WITH GENERAL TUFARIAN AND HAS SAID THAT IRANIAN INSISTENCE ON DUTCH ELECTRONICS WILL JEOPARDIZE THE AVAILABILITY OF HARPOON. ADMIRAL COLLINS HAS SUGGESTED THAT ALL PARTIES CONCERNED (U.S., IRAN, THE NETHERLANDS AND THE FRG) COULD MEET IN WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS THE MATTER. VAN EEKELEN SAID THAT HE CAN UNDERSTAND COMMERCIAL COMPETITION BUT IF THESE REPORTS OF OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ARE ACCURATE, HE WISHED TO PROTEST IN THE STRONGEST TERMS. IF THE U.S. HAS VALUE JUDGEMENTS ABOUT DUTCH FIRE CONTROL SYSTEMS, THOSE OPINIONS SHOULD BE RAISED WITH THE DUTCH, NOT WITH THE IRANIANS. THIS RAISES QUESTIONS OF ALLIANCE RELATIONSHIPS WHICH THE DUTCH WOULD FIND UNACCEPTABLE. THE SHAH HAD EARLIER CONFIRMED TO DUTCH ADMIRAL VELDKAMP THAT THE FRIGATE ORDER IS ALMOST CERTAIN FOR DUTCH YARDS AND IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THAT ORDER NOW TO BE LOST.

4. SECRETARY BROWN HAD TOLD MINISTER SCHOLTEN AT THE
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NATO SUMMIT THAT HE SAW NO PROBLEM WITH HARPOON DELIVERIES IN 1980-81, ALTHOUGH THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFICULTIES WITH EARLIER DELIVERIES. ACCORDING TO VAN EEKELEN, BROWN SAID THE LATER DELIVERIES "MAKE IT A LOT EASIER FOR THE UNITED STATES." THE DUTCH HAVE HAD NO OFFICIAL REACTION TO U.S. ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO REDUCE ARMAMENT SALES, BUT IF SALES BY U.S. ALLIES ARE BLOCKED BY THIS POLICY, IT WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND AND WOULD CREATE STRAINS IN THE ALLIANCE. THE DUTCH ARE AWARE THAT THE IRANIANS ARE SPLITTING THEIR FRIGATE ORDER, BUT WE SHOULD NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT FACT TO TRY TO UNDERCUT EACH OTHER.

5. VAN EEKELEN SUMMED UP BY ASKING THE CHARGE TO REPORT HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON, TO STRESS HOW SERIOUSLY THE DUTCH TAKE THE MATTER, AND TO REPORT DUTCH OBJECTIONS TO HAVING

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 THE HAGUE 3506

A FOUR PARTY MEETING IN WASHINGTON. WHAT THE NETHERLANDS
DESIRES NOW IS A STATEMENT OF NO OBJECTION TO THE HARPOON
SALE AND AN EXPRESSION OF OPINION REGARDING THE INTEROPERABILITY
OF US AND DUTCH WEAPONS SYSTEMS. (VAN EEKELEN TOLD US THAT
USN OFFICERS IN WASHINGTON HAD INFORMED DUTCH THAT PROPOSED
PLANS WERE TECHNICALLY SATISFACTORY WHICH MADE IT EVEN MORE
DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND CONTRARY US POSITION IN IRAN.)

6. COMMENT: VAN EEKELEN'S DEMARCHE RAISES TO A HIGHER
POLITICAL LEVEL THE CONCERN EXPRESSED LAST WEEK BY ADMIRAL
LANGENBERG TO THE CHARGE AND REPEATED TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY
VEST BY MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR RUTTEN JUNE 23 REPORTED IN
REFTEL. THE DUTCH PERCEPTION OF PREVIOUS HIGH LEVEL APPROVAL
OF THE FRIGATE SALE, AS EXPRESSED BY THE SHAH AND SECRETARY
BROWN, WILL ADD TO THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT AND PRODUCE A
DEFINITE STRAIN IN OUR RELATIONS IF HARPOON IS DISAPPROVED.
VAN EEKELEN SPECIFICALLY EMPHASIZED LATTER PPINT. WHILE WE
APPRECIATE THAT THE FINAL DECISION MAY BE DELAYED, WE NEED
URGENT GUIDANCE REGARDING WHAT WE CAN SAY TO THE DUTCH
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CONCERNING THE REPORTED CONVERSATIONS IN TEHRAN. VAN EEKELEN'S
OBJECTIONS TO THE SUGGESTED FOUR PARTY CONSULTATIONS MAY NOT
BE A REJECTION OF CONSULTATIONS PER SE SO MUCH AS A FEELING
THAT SUCH AN INVITATION REPRESENTS US EFFORT TO INJECT
ITSELF INTO NEGOTIATIONS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN CONTROL. IT

IS CLEAR DUTCH REGARD DETAILS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN AS
BILATERAL ISSUE AND WISH TO KEEP NEGOTIATIONS ON HARPOON
IN DUTCH-US CHANNEL.
BROWN

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